AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Cancelled)

2.   (Currently amended) A method for reducing bandwidth utilization in a system for distributing digital continuous media information from one or more servers, where users of the system are connected to a shared continuous media buffer, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

a first user requesting a continuous media stream from a server;

the server ~~periodically~~ sending packets to the first user representing portions of the media stream;

the shared continuous media buffer capturing the ~~encoded~~ packets sent by the server, and redistributing them to the first user;

a second user requesting the continuous media stream from the server, wherein the request is made at a time when the continuous media buffer no longer retains first packets from the stream, representing a missed portion of the stream;

sending a burst of packets to the second user representing <u>the first packets comprising</u> the missed portion of the stream, wherein the second user catches up to the buffer; and

distributing the ~~encoded~~ packets representing the stream from the shared buffer after the second user catches up to the shared buffer.

3.   (Currently amended) A method for reducing bandwidth utilization in a distributed communication system, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

transmitting a <u>cached</u> series of data packets representing a data stream to a first local client;

retaining a most recent plurality of <u>said cached</u> packets in a shared buffer;

a second local client requesting the data stream, wherein initial packets from the data stream are no longer retained in the shared buffer;

providing a high speed burst of data packets to the second local client, wherein the burst of data packets includes those initial data packets no longer retained in the shared buffer; and

transmitting remaining data packets from the stream from the shared buffer.

4.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the data stream has a defined beginning, and wherein the second local client requests the data stream from the defined beginning.

5.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the data stream has a defined beginning, and wherein the second local client requests the data stream fro ma point other than the defined beginning.

6.   (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the server periodically sending packets to the first user further comprises caching said packets before sending them to the first user and wherein the packets captured by the shared continuous media buffer are the cached packets.